

# Colleges bursting at seams

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Students are enrolling in Kentucky colleges and universities in record numbers with nearly 240,000 people taking classes this fall, according to statewide statistics released Thursday.

Tom Layzell, president of the Council on Postsecondary Education, said the enrollments in public and private colleges across Kentucky are the largest in history, up 1.7 percent over the past year.

Since the fall of 1998, enrollment at the state's<sup>SN</sup> public colleges and universities has increased by 31 percent. Western Kentucky University led the way among regional universities with a 26.7 percent increase over that period.

"This is the highest enrollment ever for us in Kentucky," Layzell said. "The main driver is the economy, and the demand for more and higher levels of education for jobs."

Kentucky State University had a 5 percent enrollment increase this year, followed by Northern Kentucky, 4.8 percent; University of Kentucky, 3.4 percent; University of Louisville 0.8 percent; Western Kentucky University, 0.8 percent; and Murray State University 0.2 percent.

The state's community and technical colleges had a 2.8 percent increase in enrollment.

Eastern Kentucky University had a 2.3 percent decline in undergraduate enrollment, and Morehead State University had a 2 percent decline. Eastern also had a decline of 5.6 percent in graduate enrollment compared to the fall of 2005. Western Kentucky University had a 3.3 percent decline in graduate enrollment.

The state's public community and technical colleges have recorded a 69 percent increase in enrollment since 1998.

Layzell said growth in the number of high school graduates help keep the state's college enrollment figures high.

"For the next few years, we'll have probably the largest number of high school graduates in our history," he said. "That trend will continue for the next few years before it begins to flatten out."

At the University of Kentucky, 4,192 freshmen enrolled for the fall semester, breaking the old record for first-year students of 3,961 set in 2004.

Total enrollment is about 27,000, up about 300 from last year, and President Lee Todd said the increase is at least partly due to the University of Kentucky's push to be a Top 20 research institution.

"There is enthusiasm about what's happening at UK and students and their families want to be part of something special," Todd said.